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ABSTRACT

This publication presents an overview of the demographic changes taking place in the United States and the growth of the Hispanic population expected by the year 2000. The personal experiences of a Cuban immigrant attending school in the United States and factors that contributed to his success in overcoming significant institutional as well as cultural obstacles are described. The need for recruitment of more Hispanics into education careers and several recent national developments focusing on enhancing educational opportunities for Hispanics at all levels are highlighted. A special emphasis is placed on the role of colleges and universities in educating Hispanic students and preparing them for careers in education. An example of a comprehensive initiative in San Antonio, Texas, named "Project: I Teach" is outlined. The project brings together local schools and university and national resources in order to: (1) recruit and retain Hispanic students in teacher education; (2) provide academic support, test-taking and study skill development, emotional and psychological support, knowledge about financial aid, facilitation of the transition from high school to college, and provision of Hispanic role models. (LL)

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The 21st Century: A Futuristic Look at Recruitment and Retention in Teacher Education Programs for Hispanic-Americans

Presented at the

Sixth Annual Conference on the Recruitment and Retention of Minorities in Education

by

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Abstract

The author presents an overview of the demographic changes taking place in the United States and the growth of the Hispanic population. He also discusses his personal experiences as a Cuban immigrant attending school in the United States and factors that contributed to his success in overcoming significant institutional as well as cultural obstacles. The need for recruiting more Hispanics into education careers and several recent national developments focusing on enhancing educational opportunities for Hispanics at all levels are highlighted. A special emphasis is placed on the role of colleges and universities in educating Hispanic students and preparing them for careers in education. An example of a comprehensive initiative implemented in San Antonio, Texas to bring together local schools, university and national resources for recruitment and retention of students in teacher education is outlined.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this Sixth Annual Conference on the Recruitment and Retention of Minorities in Education. This afternoon I will be looking at the recruitment and retention in teacher education programs for Hispanic-Americans in the 21st Century. Let me begin by saying that there is a great deal of controversy regarding Hispanic issues in the United States. For example, there is no agreement on exactly what term to use in describing this population (Sanchez, 1991). Historically, the terms Spanish Surname, Chicano, Latino, Hispanic have been used, among others, to describe this group. Today I will use the term Hispanic in its broadest sense to refer to all Hispanic/Latino groups within the United States.

There are an estimated 21 million Hispanics in the United States today. Between 1980 and 1988 the Hispanic population in the United States grew by approximately 34%. That is a growth rate five times greater than the population growth rate of non-Hispanics during the same period. In 1980 Hispanics comprised 6.5% of the U.S. population. In 1990, they made up 8.0%. By the year 2000 it is estimated that Hispanics will make up approximately 12% of the U.S. population; this compares to approximately 13.5% for African-Americans, 4% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and less than 1% for Native Americans (Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1990). By the year 2011, Hispanics will be the largest minority group in the United States.

This dramatic growth in the Hispanic population in the United States is due primarily to two factors: high birthrates and immigration. Hispanics as a group are younger than the general U.S. population and have higher birthrates. According to U.S. Census data, a 38% difference in births per 1000 women exists between Hispanic and non-Hispanic women. With regard to immigration, the United States with 5% of the world's population takes about 50% of its

international migrants, not counting refugees. In the 1950s, about 50% of U.S. immigrants came from Europe. During the 1970s, only 18% came from Europe, while more than 30% came from Latin America (Robey, 1985). This rate increased even further during the 1980s as many people sought to escape political turmoil in Central and South America.

Hispanics, however, are a diverse group. Over 65% of Hispanics living in the U.S. are Mexican Americans; 13% are mainland Puerto Ricans; 11% are from Central or South America; 5% are Cuban-Americans; and 7% are classified as other Hispanics, including groups from the Caribbean. Although these groups share many cultural and language characteristics, there are significant demographic, economic and population differences. For example, 35% of all Puerto Rican families in the United States are maintained solely by women, compared to 15% of Cuban and 16% of Mexican-Americans (Robey, 1985). The majority of Mexican- Americans reside in the Southwest primarily in the states of California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. Puerto Ricans are highly concentrated in the Northeast, primarily in New York and New Jersey. Cubans and Latin Americans are concentrated in the states of Florida and New York. Seventy-Three percent of the Hispanic-Americans are concentrated in four states: California (34%), Texas (22%), New York (10%) and Florida (8%) . If the states of Colorado, Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey, and New Mexico are included, one can account for nearly 90% of the Hispanic population in the United States (De la Rosa & Maw, 1990).

In general, despite having a very high rate of participation in the workforce, 24% of Hispanics live under the poverty rate. This compares with 12.8% of all Americans who live below the poverty rate. With regard to Hispanic children, 36% live under the poverty rate (Hispanic Policy Project, 1990). The major reason why Hispanics have such a high rate of poverty is

their lack of participation in the educational process. Between 9% and 11% of Hispanic students drop out of high school each year, the highest dropout rate of any major ethnic or racial group. In 1986, 35% of Hispanics ages 20-21 years old were high school dropouts, compared with 14% of Anglos and 18% of African-Americans. Among Hispanics over the age of 25, more than 52% have not completed high school, compared with 24% of non-Hispanics. Hispanics, along with Native Americans, are the least likely of all ethnic groups to return to complete high school. Despite the fact that overall dropout rates have been declining over the past 10 years, there has been no improvement in Hispanic rates for the past 15 years. Moreover, many Hispanic students drop out during the middle school years (Astone & Nunez-Wolmack, 1990).

There are many reasons why Hispanics do not do well in the American educational system. In addition to high rates of poverty, there are significant cultural and language factors that contribute to the lack of educational success of Hispanics. For example, Hispanics generally have field-dependent learning styles; that is, they tend to learn better through cooperative activities and involvement with others. Such a style does not fit well into the traditional competitive system found in most American schools where students are taught to be quiet, sit up straight, listen and then be able to show what they know in objective tests. Furthermore, Hispanics often have English as a second language or come from homes where Spanish is the primary language spoken. As such, they are often frustrated by the individualized reading assignments and cognitive-oriented lectures of most American teachers. Not surprisingly, Hispanic do not do well in standardized tests such as the SAT and GRE. In many cases they are also perceived as trouble-makers and face lower teacher expectations for academic success.

Let me share a personal example: I am a Cuban-born, naturalized American citizen who, like many Hispanic Americans, immigrated to this country with my family in search of a free and productive way of life. As a child growing up in Miami, I became painfully aware of the difficulties of being Hispanic in an insensitive educational system. I will never forget the day when, as an elementary school student, the principal of the school I attended came to our entirely Hispanic class to tell us how Hispanic students were disrespectful, and how "typical" Hispanic misbehavior would not be tolerated. He reminded us that this was America, and if we wanted to succeed we'd better start "acting like Americans." Although I was not fluent in English at the time, I knew by the tone of his voice and non-verbal behavior that the topic at hand was serious enough for me to try and understand exactly what was happening. I turned to one of my classmates and, in a whisper, asked "would you please tell me what's going on?" No sooner had I finished when the principal angrily rushed toward me, grabbed me by the arm, pulled me out of my chair, and said "See, this is what I mean. You are all a bunch of disrespectful brats who don't know how to be quiet when others are talking." It wasn't until later - after I've been suspended from school - that I realized what had happened. The principal was making an example out of me and I didn't even know it!

I share this experience with you because it made such an impression on me. It also made me realize that if I was going to survive in such an educational environment, I would have to risk not understanding something in order to avoid punishment. Whether that punishment came in the form of ridicule from insensitive teachers and peers or, as in my case, in suspension from school, the lesson was the same: keep your mouth shut or risk personal ridicule. I learned this lesson well and for many years I "floated" through school without much sense of involvement in my education. When I finally, and miraculously, graduated from high school in a program that

had a decidedly vocational focus, I had never given thought to going to college. In fact, I didn't know anything about college. No one in my family had ever attended college and not a single counselor or teacher ever discussed with me the possibility of attending college. Fortunately, during the summer after my high school graduation I lost the job I had working in a clothing store. Without a job and uncertain about the future, I was encouraged by a friend who was attending the University of Puerto Rico to consider going to college. At that time I didn't even know how to apply to a college or university and, even if I had, I thought I would not have been admitted. Fortunately, however, Miami Dade Community College had an open admissions policy and it seemed like a reasonable opportunity for me. Had it not been so, I never would have attended college.

Today I am a reasonably successful college professor. I was recently awarded tenure and named chair of the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida. Yet, thinking back on the days after graduation from high school, college was not in my plans. So what happened? How did I come to be a college professor? First, there was a community college with an open admissions policy which was willing to give me a chance. Perhaps it is no accident that 55% of Hispanic college students nationwide are enrolled in two-year public institutions. Community and junior colleges provide access for students without separating them from their families and community, which is an important aspect of Hispanic life. Unfortunately, however, a student's chances of completing a baccalaureate program are substantially reduced if he or she initially enrolls at a community college rather than a four-year institution. Only approximately 25% of Hispanic students who begin college at a two-year institution obtain a bachelors degree. That figure compares to approximately 65% for students who begin at a four-year institution (Astin, 1982). Thus, while providing access for some students who might not otherwise be able

to attend college, community colleges do not offer a universal solution. Four-year colleges and universities must do more to recruit Hispanic students and to help them matriculate to graduation. Only 2.9% of the Bachelors degrees awarded in the United States in 1989 went to Hispanics. In contrast, African-Americans earned 5.7% and Anglos 84.5% of the Bachelors degrees awarded that year (Pitsch, 1991).

Hispanics in higher education have been called the invisible minority. There are very few special programs, scholarship opportunities, and, in general, there is a lack of awareness of the special needs of Hispanic students in higher education. Hispanic faculty are in short supply in practically all areas of the academy. Yet, few would argue that Hispanic faculty and faculty who are culturally sensitive to the needs of Hispanic students are not crucial to the success of Hispanic students. I am sure that a primary reason I succeeded after transferring to the University of Florida, where I earned my baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degrees, is a professor in my field of study. Although he was not Hispanic, he spoke Spanish and was familiar with Hispanic culture. He made me feel welcome, often having me over to his home for dinner and Spanish conversation. He involved me in his research and, in general, served as my mentor. I cannot express to you how important this special relationship with this faculty member was for my transition to the University. Several of my Hispanic friends who also transferred to the University of Florida were not as fortunate, and dropped out. The importance of having Hispanic faculty and other faculty who can relate to Hispanic culture in order to help Hispanic students succeed can not be overstated. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, Hispanic faculty are in short supply. Even in the state of Florida, where the Hispanic population is now approximately 12%, they are vastly underrepresented among college faculty. For example at the University of Florida, only 1.6% of the faculty are Hispanic. Nationwide, only 1.7% of full

time faculty in higher education are Hispanic (American Council on Education, 1989). More must be done to increase Hispanic participation in graduate education and to encourage them to pursue academic careers if we hope to increase Hispanic recruitment and retention in teacher preparation and in other areas at the undergraduate level.

Having Hispanic faculty and faculty members who understand the language and culture, as important as it is, however, is not the only factor in helping Hispanic students succeed. Another crucial factor is financial aid. At the time I attended college in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Federal Government was sponsoring the Cuban Loan Program. Having access to designated financial aid was essential to my ability to attend college. Unfortunately, that program was phased out in the mid 1970s, and has not been replaced with a financial aid program designated for Hispanic students. The result is that Hispanic students have not received financial aid packages commensurate with their needs. This lack is particularly evident in the South, where court-ordered racial desegregation plans compelled universities only to make special efforts to increase African-American enrollment. Thus, given limited availability of financial aid and other forms of assistance, universities placed their resources for recruitment and retention on African-Americans while virtually ignoring the needs of Hispanic students. In Florida, for example, The Florida State Commission on Hispanic Affairs in 1984 examined the status of Hispanics in the State University System and recommended that the definition for the term "minority" be clarified so that Hispanics would be included. Unfortunately, however, although efforts are being made to expand the definition, inequities have not been alleviated. Consequently, Hispanic students still are not the beneficiaries of programs designed to serve minority populations in Florida's major universities.

Attitudes toward Hispanics in Florida, throughout the South, and indeed throughout the nation, must change if Hispanics are to be made full participants in the American educational enterprise. Authorities of institutional systems must recognize that Hispanics have special, perhaps unique, financial, language, and cultural needs that must be addressed if they are to be involved fully in their education. The path to excellence in our educational system is through diversity. True diversity of ideas and cultures enriches the lives not only of Hispanics and other minorities, but also of all students and society in general. We simply cannot expect our educational system to excel while ignoring the needs of our fast growing minority student populations. Fortunately, things are begining to change for Hispanics. In 1991, President Bush signed a Hispanic Education Executive Order that established a Commission on Hispanic Education and an Office of Hispanic Education within the U.S. Department of Education. One of the first initiatives of this office has been to focus on the Higher Education Reauthorization Act and how Hispanics fit into the Education 2000 goals.

Another important development has been the growth in the National Hispanic Scholarship Fund (NHSF). In 1991, Anheuser-Bush Companies and ARCO became major supporters of NHSF. A-B alone has generated over seven million dollars in scholarships and financial assistance to some 6,000 undergraduate and graduate Hispanic students. Companies in general are recognizing that the Hispanic market today stands at 130 billion dollars annually and that an educated consumer is a better, more loyal consumer. Also, there are a number of national publications emerging that focus on issues of concern to Hispanics. Notable among these is the new "Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education," which focuses on the contributions of Hispanic leaders and programs for Hispanics in higher education.

Although these new developments in American higher education are encouraging, the educational success of Hispanics cannot be insured if we wait until they are in college to focus on their needs. The educational pipeline for Hispanics is "leaking and in need of repair." (Fields, 1988) Success of Hispanics in education requires a long-term commitment. Surely, higher education is a crucial link in the achievement of that goal. Higher education not only is a vehicle for members of the Hispanic community to increase their contributions to our society, but also is a means through which teachers and counselors who work with Hispanics at all levels of the educational pipeline can become sensitive to and skilled in helping Hispanic students. Teacher training and counselor education programs throughout the United States must be made keenly aware of the responsibility they have in enabling their students and graduates to be sensitive to the unique learning styles, language barriers, and cultural differences of the students with whom they will work. No graduate of a college of education program, be it a teacher training, school administration, counselor education, or other type of educational preparation should ever be sent into the schools without at least one course in multicultural education. If we do a better job of preparing educational personnel to work in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural American society, there will never be another student who was humiliated as I was because he or she does not understand "what's going on."

However, we can not be satisfied to train traditional Anglo students in teacher preparation programs to be sensitive to the needs of Hispanics and other minorities. We also must also seek to increase minority participation in teacher preparation programs. The need for Hispanic teachers and role models at all levels of the educational system should be a national priority. Creative recruitment efforts that build linkages between the schools, the colleges and the communities are needed. One particularly noteworthy, cooperative program was developed at

the University of Texas at San Antonio and is described in the Journal of Teacher Education (Zapata, 1988). In recognition of the fact that in 1980 Hispanic teachers made up only 2.6% of elementary and 1.7% of secondary school teachers in the United States, this program sought to establish a partnership between the Educational Testing Service, the San Antonio and Edgewood Independent School Districts, and the University of Texas to recruit and train Hispanic teachers. The program was named "Project: I Teach." The goals of the project were: (1) to provide academic support to Hispanics interested in teaching as a career; (2) to provide test-taking and study skill development; (3) to provide emotional and psychological support; (4) to provide knowledge about, if not actual, financial support for Hispanics expressing an interest in teaching as a career; (5) to facilitate the transition from high school to college; and (6) to provide Hispanic role models for students interested in teaching as a carrer.

Implementation of Project: I Teach was truly a cooperative venture. Local school districts identified schools and employed project participants as teacher-aides during summer school programs. The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) used Hispanic teachers as recruiters and provided the necessary training for effective recruitment. High school students were identified through testing and interviews with involvement from the high school counselors.

Twenty-one students were accepted into the program. First year participation included field trips to UTSA, a reception for students and their parents on the UTSA campus, meetings on local school campuses every two weeks, participation in a summer institute designed to improve the student study and life skills, and social activities designed to celebrate the Hispanic culture. During the second year school counselors followed-up with activities designed to maintain student interest in teaching careers. Some of these activities included discussing experiences as

summer teacher aides, conducting interviews about the teaching profession with teachers, and university assistance in completing application and financial aid forms. In addition, each participating student was assigned a "mentor" from the university who was a student enrolled in the UTSA teacher preparation program and who was a member of Kappa Delta Pi. Of the 21 students originally enrolled, 19 were still active in the program during the second year.

Project: I Teach is an excellent example of a cooperative, integrated program designed to recruit Hispanic students into the teaching profession. It is exactly this kind of sophisticated, comprehensive effort focusing on building educational networks and mobilizing resources at all levels that hold the greatest promise for ultimate success. Each community may have to look at its own unique resources and networks. But given the challenge of educational failure among the fastest growing minority group in the United States, mobilization of all available resources for the recruitment of Hispanics into the teaching profession is essential. The demographics of the 21st Century in America will challange our educational institutions and collective creativity for effective responses like never before. The time to begin preparing is now. Recruitment and retention of Hispanics in our educational system is an idea whose time has come.

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